

## Talking about the Facts of Education Data with Parents

Here are the answers to some questions about education data that are commonly asked by parents and other members of the public.

**QUESTION:** *Why do states and districts collect education data about students?*

**ANSWER:** States and districts collect data to help students succeed and improve schools.

Teachers use education data to understand their students' needs and strengths and ensure that each child is going to be ready for college or a job. State and district leaders use education data to see how their students compare to students in other schools and whether their high school graduates are well prepared to succeed in college. States also use education data to make comparisons to other states and determine what programs, interventions, and pathways lead to success.

**QUESTION:** *Is the federal government using Common Core to collect data about individual students?*

**ANSWER:** No. Common Core does NOT require the collection of any data about students; it is simply a set of grade-level expectations for students.

Further, the federal government is prohibited by law from collecting **any** personally identifiable data (e.g., name, place and date of birth, SSN, or any other information that could be used to distinguish an individual's identity) about individual students. This means that the federal government does **not** collect data about individual students or have access to the data about individual students that states collect.

**QUESTION:** *Is the federal government collecting 400 pieces of sensitive student data, including religious preference and health information?*

**ANSWER:** No. The federal government is prohibited by law from collecting any personally identifiable data about individual students.

The mentions of "400 points of data" reference the National Education Data Model: a sort of dictionary for data that shows how data could be organized by states or districts to answer their own questions about policy and practice. This tool does **not** collect or contain any actual data. The tool is **not** related to Common Core or any federal initiative. Federal law prohibits the reporting of aggregate data (i.e., data about a large group of students) that could lead to the identification of individual students. In addition, the federal government does not have access to the information on individual students held in state databases.

**QUESTION:** *Are states selling student-level data to vendors and corporations who will use it to develop new products to market to students?*

**ANSWER:** No. States and districts CANNOT and DO NOT sell student information.

Nearly every state and school district contracts with a vendor to help them store and use their data. If your state or school district works with a vendor, that vendor is **not** allowed to let anyone see or use the data in a way that your state or district didn't specifically ask for. If your state or district hires another company, that company must follow all of the state and federal laws that protect student privacy.

The limited information that states and districts do collect is used for compliance and accountability purposes, to help students by showing their teachers how to improve their teaching and personalize lessons for each child, and by showing district leaders which teachers and school programs are most effective at helping children succeed.

For more information on the value of effective data use and on data privacy, see [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org).